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SUBJECT: BIOTECHNOLOGY OUTREACH PROJECTS - FY05 YEMEN
PROPOSAL

REF: 04 SECSTATE 244670

1. The government of Yemen is moving from an embryonic policy understanding of biotechnology to a greater desire to embrace international trade standards and to join the international trade market and open their markets to biotechnology. In the last two months, the office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) and the Department of State have conducted TIFA talks and have met with top-ranking Yemeni government officials to support Yemen's World Trade Organization (WTO) accession. Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) funded programs are educating government officials on the intricacies of intellectual property rights enforcement, commercial courts, and other key trade issues. Agricultural and environmental biotechnology issues can enjoy more attention in Yemen as it endeavors to join the world economy. At the same time, introducing to small-scale subsistence farmers in Yemen the benefits and productivity gains from genetically modified (GM) crops will help spread the word and increase community acceptance of biotechnology in agriculture.

2. To provide outreach on biotechnology issues, Embassy Sanaa proposes two programs to assist in (1) national policy formulation and (2) provide local and governorate-level education and outreach through a regional information workshop. Both program descriptions and cost estimates are based on negotiation and discussions with USAID Agricultural Officer Dorvin Stockdale, PD Officer Tim Fingarson, AfricaBio Executive Director Dr. Jocelyn R. Webster. AfricaBio, a highly-reputable NGO with an extended history of USG and USAID agricultural biotechnology programming, is a possible training provider for the programs detailed below.

PROGRAM 1: LOCAL COMMUNICATORS TRAINING PROGRAM

3. The Local Communicators Training Program will train 25 to 30 key local communicators and decisionmakers in a three-day workshop on how to communicate effectively on food, agricultural, environment and medical biotechnology to target communities and the press. The program will invite people who influence the local government policy and perceptions of the community such as policy makers, local government officials, prominent farmers and business owners in the capital, Sanaa, and five of the most poverty-stricken governorates in Yemen. (Note: For the past three years, Post's interagency development group has targeted five key governorates, which are heavily dependent on the agricultural sector, for intensive aid. End note.)

Target Audience

4. The target audience will be 25 to 30 local leaders and farmers and other regional participants who can act as "viral" communicators, spreading the news about the benefits of GM products. The selected communicators would include scientists, healthcare workers, agricultural outreach workers, and key decisionmakers in agriculture, health, education and environment in five most poverty-stricken governorates out of the 22 in Yemen.

Biotechnology issues to be addressed

5. Training will include discussion on the benefits of biotechnology to farmers such as combating animal diseases, increasing yield by plant resistance to diseases and pest, reducing environment pollution by reducing pesticide use, utilizing fertilizers effectively, facilitating minimum tillage, employing uniform harvest time, and conducting product quality control.

Cost of Proposed Program

6. Program Costs:

- 3,200 - training site for three days including equipment (Taj Sheba Hotel, Sanaa, Yemen)
 - 6,000 - lodging (Taj Sheba Hotel, \$300 for two nights per out-of-town participant)
 - 2,600 - meals
 - 4,000 - trainer's fee
 - 4,600 - trainer's travel costs (based on 01/2005 roundtrip business class from Washington, D.C. to Sanaa, Yemen visa fees overweight baggage for equipment etc.)
 - 650 - trainer's lodging and per diem
 - 300 - training materials preparation
 - 500 - miscellaneous
- 21,850 total

Impact on USG policy objectives

17. The training program will introduce the benefits of using GM crop plants to subsistence farmers and influential scientists. With a fuller understanding of biosafety assessments and use of GM crops in Yemen, the US can encourage more rapid adoption of GM farming to small-scale farmers and the Yemeni market. Opening the Yemeni market to GM products will also aid Yemen in coping with the needs associated with 3.9 percent population growth and a population expected to double to 40 million by 2020.

PROGRAM 2: BIOTECHNOLOGY POLICY WORKSHOP

18. Genetically modified organism (GMO) policy formulation in Yemen is in its infancy, yet with ongoing efforts toward WTO accession, the ROYG will have to face many of the issues that confront GM trade issues. The ROYG has not enacted or initiated any laws, regulations, or practices regarding GMO trade.

19. The Cabinet introduced a draft law banning LMO products over a year ago. After consideration, the Cabinet sent the draft law to the Yemen Standardization, Metrology and Quality Control Organization (YSMQCO), a regulatory agency comprised of agricultural, meteorological and other scientists for their recommendations. The YSMQCO forwarded a recommendation to ban LMO agricultural imports and to the Minister of Industry and Trade Rajeh Sheikh, who put the draft law on hold pending further study of the issue.

110. Post anticipates Yemen will be pressured by the international community to adopt a biotechnology and GMO policy in the run-up to WTO accession and its growing eagerness of joining the international trade community. In this climate, it is a crucial time for the US to share its views on GM products and trade. Since ROYG standards officials have few scientific resources and less exposure to the international political struggles surrounding GMOs, biotechnology, and other standards issues, it is common for such officials to defer to other international organizations, usually European-based, for matters ranging from environmental protection measures to human genetic cloning to barriers to prevent the spread of avian influenza in native poultry. Especially with the run-up and preparation for WTO accession, Post can anticipate that the ROYG will be asked to implement a GMO standard or to join other nations in a collective GMO position; standards officials could again turn to a European standard.

111. A GMO policy workshop will educate key policymakers on the technology behind GM crops, the research behind GMOs' food safety record, and other information they will need in order make well-informed policy decisions about GMOs in the near future. As discussed with YSMQCO and other government officials responsible for biotechnology standards, the workshop will also introduce the various policy directions and GM experiences of other countries in the Middle East region. Post anticipates such a workshop will be a catalyst to GMO legislation that considers the US position on GMOs.

Target Audience

112. Participants will be key government officials and scientists from various agencies responsible for determining biotechnology. Participants will be selected from the YSMQCO, the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), the Ministry of Agriculture, the Agricultural Extension and Research Authority (AREA), the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the WTO Accession Committee.

Biotechnology issues to be addressed

¶13. The workshop would present information on the following issues: Food safety, trans-boundary movement of GMOs and LMOs, patents and intellectual property rights, myths surrounding GMOs, and the experiences of other governments and countries in the Middle East such as the relatively biotechnologically advanced agricultural sector in Egypt. After the presentations, the workshop would break up into smaller discussion groups so that government officials can discuss how these issues could impact a GMO and biotechnology policy and standards formulation.

Cost of Proposed Program

¶14. Proposed costs in USD:

- 2,100 - training site for two days including equipment
- 1,300 - meals
- 4,000 - trainer's fee
- 4,600 - trainer's travel costs (based on 01/2005 roundtrip business class from Washington, D.C. to Sanaa, Yemen visa fees overweight baggage for equipment etc.)
- 550 - trainer's lodging and per diem
- 300 - training materials preparation
- 500 - miscellaneous
- 13,350 total

Purpose and Impact of Project on USG policy objectives

¶15. GMO policy formulation is in its infancy in Yemen and Yemen continues to tread water on LMO issues while its decisionmakers await further guidance from countries in the region and more input from interlocutors such as the U.S. This workshop will educate the key government decisionmakers on the reliability and safety of GM crop plants, as well as discuss the common scientific consensus that food derived from approved GMOs poses no greater health risks than that food derived from conventional methods.

¶16. For additional information please contact POC,
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